

REMARKS

In the Office Action mailed August 9, 2006, the Examiner objected to the drawings under 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a); rejected claims 1-3, 6-11, 18-20, 26-29, 31, and 32 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,050,978 to Orr et al.; rejected claim 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Orr in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,745,950 to Mathieu; rejected claim 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Orr in view of Mathieu and U.S. Patent No. 4,638,688 to Leverberg et al.; and objected to claims 4, 5, 12-14, 21-15, and 30 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but otherwise recite allowable subject matter.

By this Reply, Applicants amend claims 1-3 and 5-32, cancel claim 4, and add claims 33-97. Claims 1-3 and 5-97 are currently pending in this application.

At the outset, Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication that claims 4, 5, 12-14, 21-15, and 30 contain allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants traverse the Examiner's objection to the drawings under 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a) for allegedly failing to show every feature of the invention specified in the claims. The Examiner asserts that "the 'lateral ports' recited in claim 30 must be shown or the feature(s) canceled from the claim(s)." (Office Action at 2.) Applicants submit, however, that the "lateral ports" recited in claim 30 are depicted in Figures 2, 4, and 8 of the application, for example, which show lateral ports corresponding to the passages on male element 39. Moreover, at page 18, lines 5-9 of the specification, the lateral ports are referred to as lateral windows. "The male element [39] also has an axial-symmetric

structure with respect to said axis 15 and is collar-shaped with symmetrically opposed lateral windows for the fluids to pass through.” (Page 18, lines 5-9.) As noted above, these lateral windows (“lateral ports”) are located on male element 39, as depicted in Figs. 2, 4, and 8 (the reference numeral for male element 39 is not present on Fig. 8, however, the structure is shown).

The Examiner rejected claims 1-3, 6-11, 18-20, 26-29, 31, and 32 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Orr. Applicants disagree with the rejection of these claims under § 102(b), however, in order to expedite the prosecution of this application, Applicants have amended claim 1 to include the limitations of objected claim 4. In addition, claim 4 has been canceled. Accordingly, amended claim 1 is now allowable. Moreover, amended claims 2, 3, and 5-32 are allowable at least due to their dependence from allowable amended claim 1. Thus, Applicants respectfully ask the Examiner to withdraw the § 102(b) rejection of claims 1-3, 6-11, 18-20, 26-29, 31, and 32.

The Examiner rejected claim 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Orr in view of Mathieu and rejected claim 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Orr in view of Mathieu and Leverberg et al. Applicants disagree with the rejection of these claims under § 103(a), however, in order to expedite the prosecution of this application, Applicants point out that claims 16 and 17 both depend from allowable amended claim 1 (either directly or indirectly). Accordingly, claims 16 and 17 are allowable at least due to their dependence from allowable amended claim 1. Thus, Applicants respectfully ask the Examiner to withdraw the § 103(a) rejection of claims 16 and 17.

Turning to new claims 33-97, new independent claim 33 contains the limitations of original claim 12, as well as original claims 1 and 8-11, from which original claim 12 depended. Accordingly, new claim 33 is allowable. Moreover, new claims 34-53 are allowable at least due to their dependence from allowable new independent claim 33.

In addition, new independent claim 54 contains the limitations of original claim 14, as well as original claims 1 and 8-11, from which original claim 14 depended. Accordingly, new claim 54 is allowable. Moreover, new claims 55-64 are allowable at least due to their dependence from allowable new independent claim 54.

Further, new independent claim 65 contains the limitations of original claim 21, as well as original claims 1 and 8, from which original claim 21 depended. Accordingly, new claim 65 is allowable. Moreover, new claims 66-85 are allowable at least due to their dependence from allowable new independent claim 65.

Lastly, new independent claim 86 contains the limitations of original claim 30, as well as original claims 1 and 26-29, from which original claim 30 depended. Accordingly, new claim 86 is allowable. Moreover, new claims 87-97 are allowable at least due to their dependence from allowable new independent claim 86.

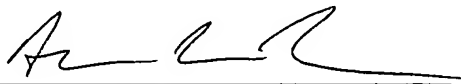
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge
any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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